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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1039
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3936
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1753
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1620
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2189
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000795

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: GIFTS TO NIYAZOV "RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE"

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (U) The Ministry of Culture opened a special exhibition on "Great Reforms of the Revival Era" at the Presidential Museum in the Cultural Center complex on June 24, but, in fact, the exhibit has nothing directly to do with either President Berdimuhamedov or his reforms. Instead, it displays an extensive collection of expensive items found in former President Niyazov's Presidential Palace and home that had been given to the former leader. The event's emcee said President Berdimuhamedov had chosen to give them back to their "real" owners -- the people of Turkmenistan.

13. (U) The guide could give little information on where the pieces came from or who gave them to Niyazov. Here and there among the generally Western name-brand items were pieces made by citizens of Turkmenistan. The museum guide seemed to take special pride in the Turkmen items, pointing out the quality of the craftsmanship -- and how some of the pieces were almost identical to similar Western items in the display. Gold statues of Niyazov, precious-metal vases, and photos filled the museum's entryway. But nobody -- including the emcee -- was able to explain the exhibit's direct connection with President Berdimuhamedov's "revival era," other than that he was returning the gifts to the people.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: It's a stretch to link the exhibit's title directly to its contents, and might have been a bit of sycophancy just before Berdimuhamedov's June 29 birthday. In fact, this collection is likely not the best stuff Niyazov received. We remember reports soon after his death that his family members were allowed to spirit abroad tons of the most valuable items. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND